Welcome 2021—Announcing PolicyLab's Newest Awarded Pilot Grant Projects

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Our pilot grant program, which we run in collaboration with Clinical Futures, supports Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) researchers in conducting clinical effectiveness or policy-oriented health services research. PolicyLab has proudly funded five innovative projects thus far, looking at issues concerning the Philadelphia Beverage Tax, teen contraceptive access, sanctuary immigration policies and more. We are now excited to reveal the three newest PolicyLab-awarded projects, which will begin this month!

1) A Multimodal Approach to Understanding the Barriers and Facilitators to Adolescent Menstrual Health Equity

Although some cultures celebrate menarche as an important event in a young women's life, the actual act of menstruation is still perceived by many cultures as taboo, primarily in low- and middle-income countries. However, the lived experiences around menstruation for those living in poverty in the U.S. are often similar to those communities within low- and middle-income countries, though few studies have explored the reality of these adolescents and young adults' lives.

In a first-of-a-kind study, **Dr. Shelby Davies**, fellow physician within the Craig-Dalsimer Division of Adolescent Medicine at CHOP, alongside PolicyLab researchers Drs. Nadia Dowshen and Sarah Wood, and R. Jean Brownlee Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania Dr. Deborah Thomas, aim to explore the experiences of adolescents and young adults who menstruate and live in poverty in the U.S., identify the barriers and facilitators to acquiring adequate menstrual health and hygiene, and understand the impact of shame and stigma that exists within this community. Based on their findings, the team hopes to generate ideas for future research and programmatic and policy change, such as the active proposal of sexual health education legislation and menstrual equity legislation in Pennsylvania and other states.

2) Experiences in Telemedicine for Children with Suspected Autism Spectrum Disorder in Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics During the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many developmental-behavioral pediatric practices expanded telehealth services to allow for evaluations and care for children with developmental differences. Emerging evidence illustrates that telehealth appointments, or video assessments, for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can be effective, yet little research has been conducted to evaluate telehealth ASD assessments performed while the child is at home.

In this mixed-methods study, PolicyLab researchers Dr. Kate Wallis and Katherine Kellom and Language Services Program Manager at CHOP **Dr. Priscilla Ortiz** plan to detail the experiences of families and providers who use telehealth services to assess ASD in young children, evaluate differences in telehealth experiences for English- and Spanish-speaking patients, and identify barriers and facilitators to equitably accessing

developmental-behavioral pediatric care for children with suspected ASD from multiple socio-demographic backgrounds. Pilot data from this study can inform future assessments of telehealth, and has the potential to inform clinical care in determining the best use of telehealth in developmental-behavioral pediatric care for children with ASD, as well as appropriate regulations for care delivered by telehealth.

3) Investigating Disparities in Prenatal Care Access and Outcomes During the COVID-19 Pandemic among Immigrant Mothers in Pennsylvania

Immigrant populations have been among the most vulnerable groups that have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many references to the impacts of the pandemic on immigrant families are based on previous research that highlights risk factors in regards to health care access and outcomes, but few studies have explored the actual lived experience of this unique population during this time.

To address this, PolicyLab researchers Deanna Marshall and Dr. Xi Wang, mentored by PolicyLab researchers Drs. Diana Montoya-Williams, and Meredith Matone, will take a mixed-method population-based approach to evaluate and understand the impact of the pandemic on immigrant mothers' access to prenatal health care and their outcomes. More specifically, the team will analyze disparities between specific immigrant communities across Pennsylvania and maternal nativity, as perceived by families, health care providers and community services providers. They will then analyze institutional policies that may impact immigrant families' engagement with health care services. By having a better understanding of these disparities within the context of COVID-19, the team's hope is to address gaps in service and build a knowledge base to improve the health and well-being of immigrant families.

A big congratulations to our wonderful researchers—we look forward to learning what they discover through their pilot grant projects. Be sure to also visit Clinical Futures' website to read about their newly awarded projects—one that is focused on investigating disparities in pediatric concussion care, and another focused on analyzing the predictors and patterns of subspecialty consultation practices among pediatric hospitalist physicians.

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